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The Blue and the Red Triangles

By

BERTHA CONDE

STUDENT VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT

25 Madison Avenue, New York

MISS BERTHA CONDÉ is Senior Student Secretary of the National Board of Young Women's Christian Associations.

THE BLUE AND THE RED TRIANGLES

BERTHA CONDÉ

One of the many careers open to experienced college men and women today is the foreign secretaryship of the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations. Opportunities for such service are found in nearly all countries and include a great variety of activities.

About thirty years ago these organizations yielded to the urgent request of missionaries in the Orient and began work in those lands. Out there they felt the same need of the specialized work of the Associations that Christian men and women in our country felt when they organized the Associations here. In response to this request many centers have been established in India, China and Japan. Soon, similar help was asked for Turkey and for parts of the Near East. In South America also men and women who had had a chance to see the results of the work in the United States and Canada asked that Associations be established in various cities and student communities of the southern continent. In this way the North American Association movements reached out to a large part of the world.

Then came the great war. Both the men's and women's organizations entered into a great campaign of personal service for our soldiers and sailors

and for the women affected by the war. The Red Triangle and the Blue Triangle went overseas and planted scores of centers in France where thousands became interested in the work of the Associations as never before. Even the troops which came from the Orient had British and American secretaries with them. The Association followed them into Egypt, Mesopotamia, Gallipoli, East and West Africa and Siberia. It is not to be wondered at that at the close of the war both organizations should find unlimited opportunities for expansion of their work in lands already entered, and pressing requests for help in opening new centers in European countries where this type of service is needed during the reconstruction period.

Much of the initiative and leadership for the Association movement abroad is sought from Canada and the United States. Poor indeed would be our sympathy with the young manhood and womanhood of the world if from our thousands of college men and women we could not provide the limited number needful to supply the requests for moral and spiritual leadership which are before these organizations. If American and Canadian men are needed for work with the young men of other lands, much more are American women needed for work among women of those lands. The American or Canadian woman is probably the most envied of all the women in the world. She has a running start in the freedom and

development of her life and her training for all kinds of work. She dares not fail women of other nations who are looking to her for help.

Before considering the Foreign Association Secretaryship as a life work, college men and women ought to examine carefully the nature of the work, the fundamental principles of the organizations, the scope of the program, the qualifications that are needed in the personality of the secretary, and the possibilities and limitations of the task. One's life and individuality are too sacred a responsibility to commit oneself to any enterprise without looking at the facts and counting the cost.

It has been one of the glories of the Church that the overflowing of its life has inspired many religious movements which are not organically related to it in administration. As certain common needs in a community have become apparent, groups of Christians have voluntarily come together to meet these needs. It was thus with the beginnings of the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations. They were organized by members of Protestant evangelical churches as a united effort of Christians to follow young men and women when away from home, in college, business and civic life; to surround them with a Christian atmosphere and to meet the practical needs of their lives. The Associations embody a comradeship of Christians of all denominations for a united work in the community which could not be done by any one Church group alone.

In the foreign fields the Associations work similarly. They are demonstrations of the practical unity for which Christ prayed. It has been the consistent policy of the Associations to enter only those communities in non-Christian lands where the Church forces urged their coming. This has been not only desirable but even necessary. The Associations can not plant their work unless there are a sufficient number of Christians to furnish the necessary leadership. In foreign lands the Associations attract large numbers of people who through prejudice are not ready to commit themselves to a new religion and who find these organizations a gateway to the Church. In China, for example, the son of one of the oldest and most prominent Chinese families was attracted to the Young Men's Christian Association by some of its social activities and became a Christian. He in turn connected his mother with the work of the Young Women's Christian Association in Shanghai, and she, too, became deeply interested in its Bible classes and other activities. It was not many months before she and several members of her family confessed their faith in Christ and were baptized into membership in the Methodist church in that city. Countless examples like this can be cited to show that the Association is the Church at work.

One of the fundamental principles of Foreign Association work concerns the matter of indigenous leadership. Associations are not started until the

moral and religious leaders of the land want them and are ready to undertake the responsibility for them. The Christian leadership of the people of the land must be secured first because the Associations are voluntary organizations, self-governing and democratic. For instance, in China, the local Association budgets of the Young Women's Christian Association are met entirely by the Chinese themselves. They also pay eighty per cent. of the China national budget for supervisory work. The financial responsibility of the American movement includes only the support of the American foreign secretaries and certain equipment for demonstration purposes to show China concrete models. These facts are of the utmost importance in considering the work of a foreign secretary. They imply an emphasis on indigenous leadership which precludes the setting up of American projects and demands foreign secretaries who are selfless enough to work behind the people of the land as inconspicuous leaders. The settled policy of the Associations is to develop as speedily as possible national supervisory committees of the people of the land and a native-born secretarial staff.

The world program of the Association movements includes the strengthening of such centers as are already established and the organizing of others in centers which are of strategic importance as demonstration points for the country. These include the great capital cities of the Orient, Latin America and

the Near East. In the Orient a special field of untold potentiality has been allocated to the Associations by the other missionary forces. It includes the thousands of men and women students in government schools who are the future leaders of their people. The fact that Associations are non-sectarian although committed to the teachings of Jesus Christ makes it possible for them to work among these students and win them to Christianity. This field alone is one of the greatest in the world and demands the highest type of foreign secretary. In Japan, the Imperial University is one of the largest universities in the world and ranks with the best in its academic standards. In India, the home of philosophers and thinkers, thousands of students study in universities which are the equal of any in the United States and Canada. The recent visits of Dr. John R. Mott and Dr. Sherwood Eddy to the Oriental centers proved that thousands of students were so interested in making an intensive study of the life and teachings of Christ that it was almost impossible to arrange Bible classes for all who wanted to enter.

In any metropolitan centers the Associations are the natural meeting places for all the Christian forces of the city. Not only are they established for the people of the land, but also for business men and leaders of the American and European communities. The Associations bring them together in Christian comradeship. Especially is this true in a land like

India where there are large groups of Europeans who need the activities of the Associations as well as do the native-born communities. There are few more lonely people in the world than those who are strangers in a strange land. To such the Foreign Associations are a boon and an opportunity for service.

The scope of Christian Association work in foreign lands is, generally speaking, the same as that in Canada and the United States. Its activities grew out of its four-fold purpose to minister to the physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual life of young men and young women. The foreign secretaries are selected because of their experience in one or more of these departments. Under the head of "physical" is included the gymnasium work, necessitating expert physical directors who can direct large classes and train other men to be directors. In China both Associations have training schools for physical directors which are giving Chinese boys and girls full courses in physical education and which furnish directors for government colleges and mission schools all over China. The Associations also promote athletic meets which develop fair play and community spirit. The Young Men's Christian Association has done much in this line and has interested thousands of young men in clean living and in high moral standards. In the Orient the Associations are undertaking health programs of national scope and are co-oper-

ating with the government in anti-tuberculosis campaigns. The recent meeting in New York of women physicians from many countries, called together by the Young Women's Christian Association, is a prelude to health campaigns for women which are so desperately needed by the women of the Orient. Other activities in foreign centers include recreation camps, lunch rooms and hostels for students and business people. These require secretaries who are food experts and who have experience in institutional management. In India the hostels of the Young Men's Christian Association have been places of rare opportunity for breaking down religious prejudices and winning respect for the Christian life. In Japan many of the women students in the Young Women's Christian Association hostels have become Christians.

The social department has become of overwhelming importance in recent years. It includes the use of the Association as a central club and rendezvous for all the members, which furnishes limitless possibilities for conference and personal influence. In the give and take of daily intercourse friendships are made and the prejudices of centuries removed. But it has come to mean much more. The war years have made the world aware as never before of their social responsibilities toward community groups and the necessity for solving age-long social problems. People were never so ready as now to follow the

Lord, at least to the extent of going about and doing good. This desire for practical service on the part of Christians and non-Christians as well has put great pressure on both Association movements as it has upon all other missions. The industrial unrest and the uprising of the masses even in the most backward countries have made people eager for social reform and they naturally look to Christian organizations to help them in the study of right principles and the application of the right methods to bring in social justice. Much has been done along this line. In one of the Associations in South America, the secretary enlisted a large number of men to go into the poorest districts of the city and teach people in the tenements to read and write. It was the first time these educated men had ever seen the real conditions in the city and their moral results. For many it meant their commitment to a life of altruistic service. There are untold chances for foreign secretaries to organize and carry through great social programs in all the lands where the Associations are planted. In this way men and women come to understand the heart of Jesus Christ and become His disciples.

The educational programs of the Associations interest hundreds of people who could not be won in any other way. In China the travelling lecturers have broken down the prejudices of thousands and have opened their minds to the new ideas which lead

on to mental and religious freedom. Classes for vocational guidance have opened the way for self support to thousands and made it easier for them to break away from old traditions. Educational films and demonstrations are some of the methods used and there are opportunities for the ablest educators to serve the Associations as educational directors.

Above all, the foreign Associations are committed to a religious purpose. This pervades all the activities which are only so many vital points of contact for the great objective. The summer conferences are centers of spiritual life and through the discussions of those days scores of students have become Christians. Last summer in one such conference in Japan more than seventy accepted Christ as their Lord. Bible classes and religious discussions are constantly held during the year and prove the necessity for secretaries to have good Bible training in order to lead inquiring minds into the true light. In the Orient the religious meetings for students have led many hundreds to become seekers after the truth. This has led to training classes for leaders where teachers for small groups are prepared.

In comparison with the total number of missionaries needed the Associations require but few. They must be men and women specially equipped for specialized work. They must have the kind of executive ability which can project and carry through large programs of service. Their Christian purpose must

be broad enough to enable them to work with all Christians and with all classes of people. They must be men and women who have confidence in the possibilities of the people among whom they work and who will be ready to give these people every opportunity to develop as leaders of their own organizations. The list of foreign secretaries required includes general administrators, student secretaries, city secretaries, industrial specialists, social service workers, educational and physical directors, evangelistic and Bible study secretaries, literary workers, business secretaries and domestic science directors.

The Associations stand in all lands as an important arm of Christian service. The work calls for statesmanship and many leaders have come into the churches because of their activities. The war has brought new opportunities and prestige and opened the way for important programs of reconstruction work. There was never a time when such opportunities for achievement faced young men and young women.

There was a great French student leader whose burning message concerning his convictions about the call to religious advance which would come after the war was heard in many an Association. From the underground fortress which he was holding against the enemy he said, "No call to sacrifice will find us unprepared. . . . We are prepared to follow Jesus Christ to the last consequence." Soon after, he gave his life for his country.

Thousands of men from non-Christian lands have shown themselves ready to lay down their lives for the cause of a great ideal of patriotism. If we honor the men who died for this ideal, surely we can do no less than live for the people who are to be the leaders of the thinking and of the action in their nations during the days to come. The heart of the matter lies in a common ideal of love and brotherhood which is only possible when all people shall worship the God revealed by Jesus Christ and take His teachings for the standard of personal, national and international ideals. The only way to speed this day is for young men and women in the fullness of their strength to go out to the nations that ask for help in leadership and bring them into touch with the program of Christ and His Kingdom.

These opportunities will not last long. Already the mutterings of national uprisings are prophetic of the time that soon will come when men will not tolerate those who live for selfish ambition alone. "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it" are the words of the One who never made mistakes. We shall never find rest until we follow in His steps. Perhaps you are one of those whom the Associations are needing. Look your resources of training and experience squarely in the face. Then ask God, "What wilt Thou have me do?"

